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GEORGE GISSING, HUMANIST

BY STANLEY ALDEN

THE casual reader of critical reviews must have been struck by the recurrence of the name of George Gissing, a novelist who, in the normal course of things, ought to have been long ago forgotten. That the name of a writer whose career began forty years ago should persist in the columns of the reviewers is enough to establish the assumption that its owner must have in his work something either unique or uniquely said; must have either intrinsic or historical value. In the case of Gissing, one can but infer from the constant use of his name in a single connection that present-day reviewers and critics regard him as the father of what may be vaguely termed "English naturalism", as opposed to that older type of realism of which in their respective times Fielding and George Eliot are exemplars. It is significant that Gissing's name almost invariably appears linked with the names of three or four Continental novelists of his own or a slightly earlier day; with Dostoievsky, Zola, Balzac, and, less often, with Daudet. Seldom is he accounted brother to Howells or George Moore. And, in common with his more widely-known European contemporaries just mentioned, he is invariably—or all but invariably—dubbed "naturalist", with the implication of praise. From such linkings it seems safe to infer that he is regarded as the same sort of naturalist, or realist (for the terms are loosely used), as his Continental confrères, while differing not only from his British contemporaries, but from the older English and American realists as well. What does such a distinction imply? Obviously that as it is habitually used "realism" means writing that deals with a certain type of matter; a type that may be roughly defined as that dealt with by Zola, or by Hardy in such a novel as *Jude the Obscure*. In other words, our younger critics have been using the words "realist" and "naturalist" almost interchangeably, and chiefly to characterize writers preoccupied with a particular

milieu, rather than to identify a method of treatment, or an underlying purpose.

Into such a category it is possible to fit Gissing with no close familiarity with his works. For casual readers he is merely the author of such reprinted novels as *The New Grub Street*, *The Whirlpool*, or possibly *The House of Cobwebs*, a volume of short-stories which have had some vogue. If other titles are known, some of them suggest matter in the province of the naturalist. *The Unclassed*, for instance, or *The Nether World*, and *Human Odds and Ends* might carry such a suggestion. It will, therefore, be seen to be significant that he has not been mentioned along with Fielding and Eliot on the one hand, nor with George Moore or Howells on the other, for, with the exception of Mr. Moore, these writers have been distinguished as realists not so much by their subjects as by their literary methods and their philosophy. It is worth while to seek a reason why George Gissing has not long since been forgotten. Is it that as an innovator George Gissing has importance historically, or has he something to say which teases the interest of novel-readers, and may even trouble the complacency of critics who dispose of him so cavalierly with a word?

Mr. Frank Swinnerton in his critical study of Gissing makes it clear that he does not consider him a realist, but dismisses the matter summarily with the remark, "He was too personal," evidently disagreeing with Gissing himself when he says: "But there can be drawn only a misleading, futile distinction between novels realistic and idealistic. It is merely a question of degree and of the author's temperament." Thus Gissing plainly understood the word as applied to manner. Now an opinion on such a matter as realism from so distinguished a realist as Mr. Swinnerton is not to be lightly dismissed, but one regrets that he has not buttressed it with additional reasons, or taken occasion to "place" Gissing with reference to his literary type. It may be valuable to consult with reference to the matter, others of his fellow-craftsmen.

Discussing "Mr. George Gissing" in his volume *Fame and Fiction*, Mr. Arnold Bennett says: "To take the common gray things which people know and despise and, without tampering, to dis-

close their epic significance, their grandeur—that is realism, as distinguished from idealism or romanticism.” (This comment about Gissing is best understood when one recalls that Mr. Bennett regards *The Nether World* as his “most characteristic novel”.) Here we see that realism includes both matter and manner, with equal emphasis on each.

Mr. H. G. Wells, writing in *The Monthly Review*, remarks that “he whose whole life was one unhappiness because he would not face realities, was declared the master and leader of the English realistic school”. If, then, Gissing’s novels are what Leslie Stephen believes novels should be, “transfigured experience—based upon direct observation and the genuine emotions which it has inspired”, one could hardly expect them to be realistic, for Mr. Wells is right in asserting that he was afraid of facing, in his own life, the stern realities. His ineptitude in money-matters, a defect which he bestows so liberally upon his leading characters, is a case in point. Surely an anomaly this, a realist who shuns reality.

Gissing’s own ideas on realism are illuminating. In his invaluable study *Charles Dickens*, for instance:

In what degree, and in what direction, does he [Dickens] feel himself at liberty to disguise facts, to modify circumstances for the sake of giving pleasure or avoiding offense?

Our “realist” will hear of no such paltering with truth. Heedless of Pilate’s question, he takes for granted that the truth can be got at, and that it is his plain duty to set it down without compromise; or, if less crude in his perceptions, he holds that truth, for the artist, is the impression produced on him, and that to convey this impression with entire sincerity is his sole reason for existing. To Dickens such a view of the artist never presented itself. Art, for him, was art precisely because it was not nature. Even our realists may recognize this, and may grant that it is the business of art to select, to dispose—under penalties if the result be falsification.

Here we see something of what realism meant to Gissing, as we do also when he refers to Balzac, Victor Hugo, Dostoevsky, and Daudet as “Realists . . . men with an uncompromising method, and utterly heedless as to whether they give pleasure or pain.”

With distinguished insight he blames Dickens for fearing to write of disagreeable facts, so that he commits a capital artistic

crime by causing Little Em'ly to seem to flee with Steerforth for mercenary reasons, while if the affair had been shown as Dostoevsky would have displayed it, with abundant though disagreeable detail, we should have been able to understand Emily's temptation, and to sympathize with her weakness. George Eliot, he points out, is, like Dickens, at fault in not motivating more fully the fall of Hetty, in *Adam Bede*. Out of deference for British susceptibility these two realists of an older school tampered with their "fact" and thus falsified, artistically, in a way that would have been impossible to Gissing, or to the leading Continental realists. Again, he speaks of the difference between Dickens and the novelists of the French and the Russian schools, "a difference which seems to involve the use of that very idle word 'realism'".

But by whatever type-name he would have chosen to call the novelist, Gissing's conception of him should be clear: "truth, for the artist, is the impression produced on him" and his business is to convey that impression with "entire sincerity"—a fine ideal, and one which Gissing attained in no mean degree. It is not by choice that he writes so largely of the submerged or semi-submerged world. He wrote oftenest of the people, the places, and the life that he knew best; the life of a literary toiler in London, a young man educated usually above his class and thus alien from it, as well as from the casual associates which his poverty and lack of social connections forced upon him. In a number of novels this hero recurs. Godwin Peake will come to the minds of those who have read that not very life-like novel, *Born in Exile*. And besides him there are Earwaker, Piers Otway, Osmond Waymark, Julian Casti, Kingcote, Harold Biffin, and Whelpdale, and other less conspicuous wanderers in "the Valley of the Shadow of Books". But he does not confine himself to portraying the unfortunate dwellers in the poorer quarters of London, though he is best known as the exponent of Lambeth, Clerkenwell, Tottenham Court Road, and of all that sordid East Side which, in so different a guise, is now being pictured by Mr. Thomas Burke.

The glimpses one gets in the Gissing novels of Surrey, Yorkshire, Devon and Cornwall, and the detailed pictures of Italy and Greece, are no less vivid and no less accurate and complete in detail. Of the life in these places, however, we hear less, and cer-

tainly what he tells us makes no such lasting impression as those pictures of squalor and distress with which his London scene abounds. Mr. A. C. Benson says of Gissing's novels that they had, "when he treated of his own peculiar stratum, the same quality of hard reality which I value most of all in a work of fiction. The actors were not so much vulgar as underbred; their ambitions and tastes were often deplorable. But one felt that they were real people." If we were speaking of Gissing's settings alone, realistic would be a fairly adequate tag; but obviously enough, setting is only the background for his picture of life.

In these settings one constantly happens upon bits of description so striking as to fix themselves in the consciousness like a vivid dream:

An evil smell hung about the butchers' and the fish shops. A public-house poisoned a whole street with alcoholic fumes; from sewer-grates rose a miasma that caught the breath. People who bought butter from the little dealers had to carry it away in a saucer, covered with a piece of paper, which in a few minutes turned oily dark. Rotting fruit, flung out by costermongers, offered a dire regale to little ragamuffins prowling like the cats and dogs. Babies' bottles were choked with thick-curdling milk, and sweets melted in grimy little hands.

This, with its appeal to so many of our senses, is the sort of thing that earns him his title, realist. But it is not always of the disagreeable that he gives these pictures:

An exquisite after-glow seemed as if it would never pass away. Above thin, gray clouds stretching along the horizon a purple flush melted insensibly into the dark blue of the zenith. Eastward the sky was piled with lurid rack, sullen-tinted folds edged with the hue of sulphur. The sea had a strange aspect, curved tracts of pale blue lying motionless upon a dark expanse rippled by the wind. Below me, as I leaned on the seawall, a fisherman's boat crept duskily along the rocks, a splash of oars soft-sounding in the stillness.

Such passages and others as carefully wrought are legitimately realistic, if by this term we mean that they have been written from actual observation and that they represent the impression made upon the author, reproduced without that "tampering" which Mr. Arnold Bennett decries. Seldom indeed does one detect any tampering, any attempt to suppress evidence, to falsify logical conclusions for the sake of public taste. Especially in his earlier work is it observable that Gissing permits a flat and un-

interesting ending, strongly suggestive of the Russians, rather than by any artificial heightening, an ending of the sort nineteenth of all English and American fiction has led us to expect, and which even so veracious a writer as Dickens (as Gissing points out) was almost always guilty of. The endings of *The Nether World*, *The Emancipated*, *Thyrza*, *A Life's Morning*, and of most of his short-stories, will illustrate the point. In no case, even where there is comparative happiness at the end, does the outcome seem other than the logical one, or the story fail of being a faithful presentation of life.

Now Mr. Swinnerton, very properly, is thinking of the substance of Gissing's novels when he says that he is "too personal" to be a realist. Does he mean by this remark any more than that he has too often used himself, in one guise of another, for hero, and that because he represents his own special angle of vision he falls short of that impossible objectivity which so many present-day realists claim for themselves? Mr. Swinnerton is in agreement with Mr. Thomas Seccombe as to Gissing's being "too personal", for the latter in his introduction to *The House of Cobwebs*, beyond question the most valuable because the most sympathetic study of Gissing (and one to which Mr. Swinnerton acknowledges indebtedness), says:

He has no objectivity. His point of view is almost entirely personal. It is not the *lacrimæ rerum*, but the *lacrimæ dierum suorum*, that makes his pages often so forlorn. His laments are all uttered by the waters of Babylon in a strange land. His nostalgia in the land of exile, estranged from every refinement, was greatly enhanced by the fact that he could not get on with ordinary men, but exhibited almost to the last a practical incapacity, a curious inability to do the sane and the secure thing.

A little earlier in the same article Mr. Seccombe says of his realism:

His approximation at times to the confines of French realistic art is of the most accidental and incidental kind.

And he continues by saying that he is "a thorough moralist and sentimentalist". Sentimentalist he may have been, if by the expression one means that he drew an occasionally sentimental picture of a young woman, but in the deeper implications of the

word, he was far from sentimental. That is, emotion for its own sake he constantly decried, and it is in the more intellectually sympathetic relations of women and men that he finds their truest self-expression. When Alma Rolfe consents to being reasonable and trying to understand the point of view of her husband, she is most lovable and winning, and Nancy Tarrant dons her aureole only when she is sweetly reasonable. His women who have risen above merely sentimental relationships with men are those whom he most lovingly delineates: Ida Starr, Irene Derwent, Thyrza, Rhoda Nunn, and Miriam Baske, after she has become Mrs. Ross Mallard. He would have said of his realism that "it is merely a question of degree and of the author's temperament".

Although his attitude toward women is often slightly contemptuous, a circumstance not difficult to understand when one considers his marital tragedies, he seems to have had a deep and almost mystical reverence for womanhood. Apart from his more or less distorted and grotesque pictures of womankind, one recalls his many idealized portraits of girls. To mention some of the more conspicuous, there are: Cecily Doran, a lovely and vivid maiden, dimming slightly into a too-self-immolating wife; Sidwell Warricombe, conventional but of a quiet and virginal charm; Irene Derwent; Thyrza, a greatly idealized character in the book to which she gives her name, one of his most delicately wrought novels; Adela Waltham; Jane Snowden, touching bit of humanity tossed up by the wave of slum-life in London; and the too ethereal Veranilda.

There is moreover a vein of the romantic in his preoccupation with little-known places. His characters have a way of going off suddenly to Odessa, St. Jean de Luz, Honolulu, Tasmania or the Bahamas, and their mastery of foreign languages and familiarity with out-of-the-way literature is astounding. Someone has always returned from a trip round the world, or is setting forth for Egypt or Queensland. All his chief characters are citizens of the world and by preference of that part of the world distant from main-travelled roads.

Besides these evidences, one may point to his humanitarian and romantic interest in animals and in the suppression of war.

Marcella Moxey is (ironically enough) killed by the kick of a horse that she is defending from his cruel driver; in *The Crown of Life* there is bitter satire on the wanton shooting of wild birds, and Lee Hannaford, the inventor of highly destructive munitions, is mercilessly flayed. But I do not mean to show that these romantic and idealistic interests predominate; only to show that "it is merely a question of degree", and that to dub Gissing "realist", unqualifiedly, is not warrantable, any more than it would be to call him "romanticist" or "idealist". Some larger category is needed, one taking into account not only his literary methods and temperamental leanings but also his central philosophy, for this is one of his chief merits and raises him above the level of the minor novelists who were his contemporaries—above his brother Algernon, for instance—as well as above most of his successors.

In discussing Gissing's philosophy one must remember that he lived chiefly by his pen, or by the equally exhausting business of private teaching. This fact, and the one that his formal education ended when he was a mere youth, are eloquent and account measurably for the crudity both in construction and content that all but the blindest of his critics must recognize in his books. A philosophy is the result of extensive and mature study as well as of having lived. The fact that as a boy of fifteen he won a first place in the kingdom in the Oxford local examinations says much for the calibre of his mind; a mind which if it had had the opportunity and leisure to flower would have been more orderly and better balanced. But his career at Owens College was sharply terminated through his boyish folly, and never again had he either the leisure or the opportunity for that rounded and traditional education which has done so much to produce the English gentleman and scholar.

Like his own Edwin Reardon in *The New Grub Street*, he had ideals which, though they might repel the public, should have won for him a higher place than he now occupies. For he had ideas; a fact quite generally overlooked. At a time when all Europe was holding itself in leash while preparing for war, Gissing busied himself with exposing the futility of war; in *The Whirlpool* he discusses with much point the education of children; the inroads of manufacture upon village life and the impracticability of a com-

munistic solution of the problem of labor and capital, he treats seriously in *Demos*, while he glances at it in *Ryecroft* and in some of his short-stories such as *The Firebrand*; scarcely one of his novels but contains a serious study of marriage. Note the following wise observation as to commerce:

If trade is not to put an end to human progress, it must be pursued in Montcharmont's spirit. It's only returning to a better time; our own man of business is a creation of our own century, and as bad a thing as it has produced. Commerce must be humanized once more. We invented machinery, and it has enslaved us—a rule of iron, the servile belief that money-making is an end in itself, to be attained by hard selfishness.

Newspapers and periodicals, particularly those that cater to the ignorance and prejudices of their readers, he often satirizes, as for instance when he has Whelpdale hit upon the expedient of changing the name of his journal *Chat* to *Chit-Chat*, and of reducing the length of the articles to correspond to the average reader's capacity for sustained attention. Only now, in America, are we beginning to observe the deleterious effect of cheap journalism (aided unfortunately just now by the more pernicious moving-picture) upon the power to sustain attention. We have discovered a system for de-intellectualizing the drama, the novel, and even the essay.

At a time when few novelists in England spoke with understanding of the new place that woman is destined soon to fill, he constantly pointed to the necessity for widening her horizons by humane education. The following is from *Born in Exile* (1893):

The defect of the female mind? It is my belief that this is nothing more nor less than the defect of the uneducated human mind. I believe most men among the brutally ignorant exhibit the very faults which are cried out upon as exclusively feminine. A woman has hitherto been an ignorant human being; that explains everything.

Although this sounds somewhat old-fashioned hardly a generation after it was written, one recognizes that by no means all of the novel-reading world has even yet come to understand its underlying truth.

But while making these discriminating observations he recognizes the evil results sure to come from imperfect and nominal

education of women—or of such education in general—which he exposes to ridicule in *In The Year of Jubilee*, particularly through Jessica Morgan, with her dry manuals and little black-bound note-books wherein she marshals her dates and facts against the coming examinations. Nancy and Horace Lord, and Samuel Barmby, in the same novel, are also shown to be the victims of this charlatan-education. Gissing's England was suffering from the malady of a newly-popularized education, with its wide but superficial appeal, in a way similar to that in which the United States is suffering to-day.

It seems to me as I read Gissing chronologically, that he made progress through the twenty-three years of his literary career, not always in artistry, but certainly in philosophical grasp of the implications of life, until at the end he had come firmly to believe that man is indeed the measure of all things. Beginning with the larger social problems of the mid-century, problems with which his idol Dickens, Kingsley, Ruskin, and Carlyle were likewise deeply concerned, he gradually worked away from these, since he found them insoluble (and because he found them so, earned in company with all humanists the mob-bestowed title of "pessimist"), to the basic problem of man's nature and its betterment. Here he is more nearly in the tradition of Meredith, Browning, and Matthew Arnold.

Yes, on the whole, Gissing is on the side of the humanistic angels. But he did not immediately nor easily take his place there, partly because of those very defects in education which he exposes in some of his characters, and partly because of the devastating poverty that prevented normal contact with human life and its sanative power. A world of evidence for his humanism could be adduced, but let me present all that seems needful, under his conception of the gentleman; his recognition of the importance of the individual as embodying, in little, the human race; and his emphasis upon what is characteristic, as the essential thing.

Fortunately in his *Charles Dickens* he has given us his notion of a gentleman, a valuable contribution to the study of any writer's philosophy:

I cannot fall in with the common judgment that Dickens never shows a gentleman. Twice, certainly, he has done so, with the interesting distinction

that in one case he depicts a gentleman of the old school; in the other, a representative of the fine manhood which came into existence (or became commonly observable) in his latter years. In John Jarndyce I can detect no vulgarity; he appears to me compact of good sense, honor, and gentle feelings. His eccentricity does not pass bounds; the better we know him the less observable it grows.

In other words, Gissing recognizes that there is a standard or normal gentleman by whom we may measure any pretender to that grand old title. Sir Leicester Dedlock he finds not quite a gentleman because "his special characteristics overcharge the portrait". He is too far from the typical or normal. He calls Cousin Feenix (in *Dombey and Son*) one of Dickens's best sketches of an aristocrat because "his heart is right, his apprehensions are delicate".

One of his most widely quoted and soundest dicta is on just this point of refinement of the feelings: it is from *The Private Papers*, and he is speaking of his housekeeper:

In my youth, looking at this man and that, I marvelled that humanity had made so little progress. Now, looking at men in the multitude, I marvel that they have advanced so far.

Foolishly arrogant as I was, I used to judge the worth of a person by his intellectual power and attainment. I could see no good where there was no logic, no charm where there was no learning. Now I think that one has to distinguish between two forms of intelligence, that of the brain, and that of the heart, and I have come to regard the second as by far the more important. I guard myself against saying that intelligence does not matter; the fool is ever as obnoxious as he is wearisome. But assuredly the best people I have known were saved from folly not by the intellect but by the heart. They come before me, and I see them greatly ignorant, strongly prejudiced, capable of absurd mis-reasoning; yet their faces shine with the supreme virtues, kindness, sweetness, modesty, generosity. Possessing these qualities, they at the same time understand how to use them; they have the intelligence of the heart.

Perhaps Gissing's own gentlemen may seem a trifle anæmic, bookmen, self-centered and aloof, yet he has created some rather vigorous types who would not measure so badly by the standard gentleman. For examples, there are: Ross Mallard, especially after he has been humanized by marriage; Hugh Carnaby, surely vigorous enough; Edmund Langley; and, of course, Ryecroft himself.

In *Born in Exile* he once bursts forth: "I can't pretend to care for anything but individuals." Later, in *Our Friend the Charlatan*, Sir William Amys, one of the few sound characters in this melodramatic and mechanical picture of types the author hated, remarks:

I don't know that I have much faith in leagues. I am a lost individualist. Let everyone try to civilize himself; depend upon it, it's the best work he can do for the world at large.

Now although Gissing's preoccupation is with the individual, especially in his later work, he sees that the individual is valuable only as he is limited by human law: as a member of society. "Never yet did true rebel, who has burst the barrier of social limitations, find aught but *ennui* in the trim gardens beyond," he says in *The Nether World* (1889), at a time when he was groping for and just beginning to discover the significance of life. The English novelist would have been in complete accord with the Norwegian diplomatist and scholar, Mr. Sigurd Ibsen, when he says:

I cannot discover any thoughtlessness, any defective power of judgment, in the appreciation of the great personality in itself, without regard to the service he has done or the harm he has caused. On the contrary: I see in this a sound and correct judgment, which feels that the greatest values must be sought in the human being as such, and that they who in their own existences have shown us a human summit, have rendered the most excellent service possible to perform.

Gissing's appreciation of the importance of the characteristic, as opposed to the merely accidental or individual, is no less real than his grasp of the theory that the business of mankind is to produce as its crowning achievement the perfect human being. Sigurd Ibsen once more may be his spokesman:

As a rule, it is in what is characteristic that we find what is worthy. The superiority of a rose in our eyes, consists in those qualities that distinguish it from other flowers, and the horticulturist's efforts are not directed towards obliterating these qualities by driving them back to common type, but, on the contrary, to force them more to the foreground so that the rose becomes even more a rose than it was before. Likewise should the task of culture be to make man more and more manlike.

In discussing Dickens's character-drawing, Gissing praises

Mrs. Gamp as a singular example of excellence of her kind. After saying that she represents the most delicate idealism, he calls this picture "a sublimation of the essence of Gamp", and continues:

No novelist (say what he will) ever gave us a picture of life which was not idealized; but there are degrees, degrees of purpose and of power. Juliet's nurse is an idealized portrait, but it comes much nearer to the real thing than Mrs. Gamp; in our middle-class England we cannot altogether away with the free-spoken dame of Verona; we Bowdlerize her—of course damaging her in the process.

This passage throws light obliquely on Gissing's view of life at the same time that it shows his conception of the novelist's art: what is essential is the significant, the invaluable; and to exhibit this in art one must "idealize", select—no transcript of life will suffice.

Are we not able, then, to unify his reading of life and of art, and to find in these, together, the quintessence of George Gissing? Realist he is only in part, and by no means in the commonly accepted sense of the word, for always, but especially toward the end of his career, he designed his books to body forth an interpretation of life, which interpretation is that the perfected individual (the man who keeps to a golden mean between the extremes of freedom and restraint), and not the mass, is mankind's chief concern. Never is he "naturalist", for his philosophical emphasis of the distinction between nature as represented by civilized man and by "outer nature" is an outstanding characteristic and separates him forever from those who for their gloss upon human nature study the barnyard fowls. In *Sleeping Fires* he has Langley say to Louis Reed: "The world never had such need of the Greeks as in our time. Vigor, sanity, and joy—that's their gospel." And it is Gissing's own gospel.

It has already been observed that at the outset of his career he was concerned with the problems of class, particularly with the lower middle class, and with those who having once belonged to it had through economic pressure sunk beneath and become a part of the flotsam of London. In those early novels he would study the conditions among these people, not very sympathetically to be sure, though I can by no means agree with anyone who holds that Gissing did not know them quite as well as anyone could who, not of them, was obliged to dwell among them. Strictly speak-

ing, this class never has a spokesman, for it is and always will be inarticulate.

Toward the end of his life Gissing busies himself with the discovery of a working philosophy for the individual. Nowhere more than in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* and in *The Whirlpool* do we find his explicit answer to the question, "What is the end of man?" Both Harvey Rolfe and Henry Ryecroft, I take it, stand forth his spokesmen. (It is hardly necessary, now, to point out that *Ryecroft* is in no literal sense an autobiography, but it may be worth while to remark that it is much more truly biographical than that thinly masked malice and scandal, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*.) Each of these two men finds himself absorbed in the solution of his relation to the universe, and each arrives at the conclusion that to make one's self the centre, to work for intensive not extensive development, is the thing to be desired. Rolfe would write the history of some corner of English soil (perhaps of a single market-cross), study the microcosm in order to understand the macrocosm. He is another less distinguished Henry Adams, only his twelfth century is a moment of time in the late nineteenth century, and his Chartres, some bit of ground "that is forever England". Ryecroft would spend his declining years amid the slopes of his beloved Devon, beguiled by the reading of old books and cheered by country rambles. Nature to Gissing was ever a solace, a guide, too, in that it spoke of the simple fundamental processes of living and growth, such as a man of his complex and not quite normal nature was likely to forget. One would like to think of this tired, ill and unhappy writer, the scholar *manqué*, the misunderstood and little-appreciated philosopher, as having opened his eyes for the last time upon the sweet Devon meadows instead of the unfriendly mountains in alien St. Jean de Luz.

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